



Back to School  
2016

# Healthy Packed Options

One of the biggest changes for a kid coming off of summer vacation is getting back into the habit of quick, easy lunches. This can be a challenge for parents too. After a summer of having time to prepare a variety of meals, the school lunch structure can take some getting used to.

Many of us want the healthiest options for our children, but finding the time to make this happen can be difficult. With creativity — and a child who isn't too picky — there are many ways to incorporate a diverse array of healthy foods.

## FRUITS AND VEGGIES

The meat-cheese-cracker lunch package options are convenient, but they're also lacking fruits and vegetables. As more and more research comes out showing the effects of processed foods on our overall health, consider making your own variety pack for your child's lunch.

Fresh meats and cheeses can still be a staple of the meal, but don't forget to add a container of grapes or a full apple. Celery sticks with a side of peanut butter is a convenient option, and green peppers can easily be sliced and packed for a healthy side option.

## WARM IT UP

Lunch doesn't always have to be cold. Your A-plus student deserves a little variety. Purchase a lunchbox-sized thermos that can store heated foods for up to a full day. Instructions will vary with each product, but you basically will need to fill the container with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Next, heat



up your food to the desired temperature and replace the water with the food in the thermos.

This approach opens a whole new world of lunchtime options, including soups, casseroles and leftovers. It also

allows you to send fresh, healthy meals for your child and gives you great variety throughout the course of the school year.

## PREPARE

We've all done the lunchtime

packing rush. You lose track of time in the morning and are forced to throw together a hodgepodge meal for your child's lunch. This can lead to packing for convenience instead of healthfulness.

When possible, try to at least

come up with the idea for lunch the night before. You can still pack it in the morning, but having a plan in place before the rush of the school day can go a long way toward making sure you're sending your child with a healthy lunch.

# Getting to School Safely

There comes a time when your little boy or girl transforms into a young adult, fully capable of driving to school. While this can be an overwhelming experience for mom and dad, it also is one that can teach your child great independence and responsibility.

As technology continues to evolve, it is more important than ever to outline the dangers of distracted driving. Below are some eye-opening statistics that could lead to further conversation with your teen on the importance of staying focused while driving.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that distraction was a factor in nearly six out of 10 moderate to severe teen crashes, which is four times as many as official estimates based on police reports.

The most common forms of distraction leading up to a crash by a teen driver, according to the AAA, include:

- Interacting with one or more passengers: 15 percent;
- Cell phone use: 12 percent;
- Looking at something in the vehicle: 10 percent;
- Looking at something outside the vehicle: 9 percent;
- Singing/moving to music: 8 percent;
- Grooming: 6 percent; and
- Reaching for an object: 6 percent.

## CHILD PASSENGER TIPS

You may decide to enlist the help of your teen driver in transporting younger siblings to school or daycare. Here are some tips on passenger safety from the American Academy of Pediatrics:



- All passengers should wear a seat belt or use an age- and size-appropriate car safety seat or booster seat.

- Your child should ride in a car safety seat with a harness

as long as possible and then ride in a belt-positioning booster seat.

- Your child is ready for a booster seat when she has reached the top weight or

height allowed for her seat, her shoulders are above the top harness slots, or her ears have reached the top of the seat.

- Your child should ride in a

belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle's seat belt fits properly (usually when the child reaches about 4-foot-9 in height and is between 8 and 12 years of age).

# Watch Out For Bullying

**B**ullying and cyberbullying is either physical or verbal and occurs when a child picks on another child repeatedly. It can happen anywhere at anytime, and isn't restricted to the playground or school bus anymore.

Social media has enabled bullying to happen from afar. There are more avenues than ever before for bullying to infiltrate, making it critical that parents keep a close eye on all communication platforms their children use.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these tips for keeping your children safe from bullying this school year:

## WHEN YOUR CHILD IS BULLIED

Help your child learn how to respond by teaching your child how to:

- Look the bully in the eye;
- Stand tall and stay calm in a difficult situation; and
- Walk away.

Teach your child how to say in a firm voice:

- "I don't like what you are doing."
- "Please do NOT talk to me like that."
- "Why would you say that?"

Other tips include teaching your child when and how to ask a trusted adult for help and encouraging your child to make friends with other children. You also should be willing to work closely with school teachers and administrators to help monitor the situation when you are unable to be around.



## WHEN YOUR CHILD IS THE BULLY

There may be an occurrence that involves your child participating in bullying behavior. Maybe he got wrapped up in the wrong crowd or is acting

out for some reason. Regardless of the cause, it's up to you to step in. Here are more tips from the AAP:

- Be sure your child knows that bullying is never OK;
- Set firm and consistent lim-

its on your child's aggressive behavior;

- Be a positive role model to show children they can get what they want without teasing, threatening or hurting;
- Use effective, non-physical

discipline, such as loss of privileges; and

- Develop practical solutions with the school principal, teachers, counselors and parents of the children your child has bullied.

# Starting a New School

**M**aking the leap to a new school can be downright difficult for a kid at any age. There are new friends to make, teachers to meet and new routines to settle into. It's important to realize this challenge as parents, especially since we are likely going through difficulties of our own in adjusting to the new location.

Even in the midst of your own stresses, be sure to take the time to connect with your child to prepare them for the transition and then check in on the progress throughout the school year. If you don't, you may find later that your child has been struggling socially and academically long before you involve yourself in the process.

## CHOOSING A SCHOOL

If you're moving to a completely new area for work or family changes, choosing a school should be one of the first steps. If there are multiple options, how do you choose the one that's right for your child? It all comes down to research.

There are many online resources that track statewide performance in standardized testing. You also can set up appointments with administrators from each school to get a sense of what each has to offer. Location, staff and size of the school should all be factors in your decision. Encourage your child to offer an opinion on the choice before making a final decision.

## AVOIDING STRESS

Teens across the country — 27 percent in fact — report feeling extreme stress during the school year, according to new

research from the American Psychological Association. Other findings included 34 percent of teens expecting stress to increase in the coming year.

Changing schools can be one of the most stressful situations for a student to experience. That's why it's so important to stay positive during this period of great change. As the school year approaches, be open with your child about what to expect. Reassure your child that a new school means new opportunities to learn and make friends. Try your best to understand and empathize with your child's feelings of stress instead of simply brushing them under the rug.

## EARLY INVOLVEMENT

It's important to take every opportunity to familiarize yourself and your child with the new school environment. Take some time before the start of school to talk about safe routes to school or find the bus stop she'll be using.

If the school hosts any type of new student orientation, take advantage. These are great ways to meet new teachers, administrators, parents and peers. Be ready to involve yourself in whatever functions you can at the school to help your child feel like you are an active participant in the process.



# Benefits of School Sports

Joining an athletic team is a great way for student-athletes to build relationships with others and confidence in themselves. From football and basketball to volleyball and golf, there is a sport for every season depending on the size and location of your child's school.

Parents play a key role in encouraging their children to join an athletic team without being overly pushy. If your child shows an interest in a sport, there are various things you can do to make sure it is an enjoyable experience.

## SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Sports aren't solely about game day. There is extensive work required during practices and camps that may not be on your child's radar just yet. Before signing your child up to play a competitive sport in middle school or high school, be sure he or she understands the commitment that will go into being a member of the team.

Encourage your child to talk with the team's coach to get an idea of the amount of time associated with the schedule. Check this time requirement against other activities — both school and family-related — in which your child is currently involved. This kind of research can be a big help in making your decision as a family.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Playing sports is not only fun but can have a big impact on your child's fitness levels. According to a report from the National Federation of State High School Associations, a



study found girls had a healthier weight and body mass when they were given more opportunities to participate in high school athletics.

Studies also suggest that stu-

dent-athletes are less likely to participate in risky behavior when they are part of an athletic team. The more a child is engaged in something productive that requires both mental

and physical commitment, the more likely they are to stick to healthy life decisions.

Other potential benefits, according to research by national organizations, include

higher grade point averages, better attendance, stronger social relationships and enhanced skills in leadership, time management, creativity and concentration.

# Save On School Supplies

Shopping for school supplies can hit your wallet hard, especially if you're sending multiple children to school this fall. Fortunately there are many ways to save if you take the time to put together a solid plan.

Many teachers send out a school supply list a few weeks ahead of the school year's first day. You may want to wait to start shopping until this list arrives, but you can probably get started at the first sign of deals for basics, such as writing utensils, folders and paper.

Remember that the earlier you complete your shopping, the more cash you are likely to save. Stores may run low on inventory as the school year gets closer.

## TAKE STOCK

Especially if your child has

been in school for multiple years, you likely already have many of the required items at home. Take a look around the house and compile all of the pencils, erasers, rulers, notebooks and binders you can find. This simple action can lead to substantial savings before you even head to the store.

These can generally be re-purposed for another school year if they're still in good shape. Place them into a central location, such as a small plastic tote, and distribute them appropriately to each child's supply kit.

## LOCAL STORES AND SALES

Ready to head to the store? Look for bargains at thrift stores. Clothing is affordable, and many of your local stores are likely running special sales for back-to-school shopping. The items may go quickly, so be sure to start your shopping a few weeks ahead of the start of the school year.

You also can check out your local newspaper for garage sale listings. You can find a ton of great deals on backpacks, supplies and even clothes that can help you save on your school

preparations.

## INVOLVE THE KIDS

Want to teach your kids a lesson or two? Get them involved in setting and adhering to a school supply budget. Set limits with your kids and talk to them about the importance of saving money and finding great deals.

Speaking to children about money management from a young age can lead to better financial decision-making in the future. It's never too early to learn about money, and back to school is a great time to start.

# A Homework Routine

One of the most important factors in determining your student's performance in school is his homework routine. What happens in the hours after school can be just as important as what happens inside the classroom, and parents are responsible for making sure this time is as productive, encouraging and distraction-free as possible.

If you fail to set routines and expectations from an early age, it can be difficult for students to complete their homework in an efficient manner. This can lead to late assignments and poor grades.

Fortunately, putting together a clear homework schedule isn't as difficult as it may sound. It all starts with carving out some time in the after-school schedule. Work with your student early in the school year to make sure you have a clear understanding of her extracurricular schedule, as well as what the homework requirements for the various classes will be. This can help you devise a schedule and strategy that leads to on-time homework completion.

## KNOW YOUR BOUNDARIES

A study by the Bett Educational Technology Tradeshow found that in one in six families, parents do all of their child's homework. This is unacceptable behavior for many reasons, most notably the fact that the student is short-changed from actually learning the subject matter.

As parents, we must help our children develop the ability to complete homework independently. If your child is in the younger grades, help may be needed in checking home-



work and making sure it is completed, but try to separate yourself from the processes that require critical thinking and self-study unless your child is having difficulty overcoming a particular part of the assignment. Even then, offer

your guidance in a strategic way that encourages your child to come up with the answers independently.

## TAKING BREAKS

Doing homework isn't always the most enjoyable

experience, especially after your little brainiac has spent the entire day at school. If frustration ensues, make sure to encourage short breaks.

Taking a breather for a short walk or snack may help your child re-focus and get back to

work.

Keep the snacks healthy and light, and try to make the breaks relatively short. You don't want your child to lose momentum on an assignment or forget where he was in the process.